SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A STUDY

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Sir Rabindranath Tagore.

INTRODUCTION.

"IN the literary firmament of India, no star shines with greater splendour to-day than Sir Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest living poet of Bengal. One of the most striking figures in the literary revival in Bengal, he has been one of the chief formative influences of the new era on which Bengal has in recent times entered. His work is nothing if not a passionate expression of love for the motherland. He is indeed one of the greatest singers of nationalism. His songs have nerved a nation's heart and filled it with a new life. The influence of the poets is, after all, the deepest and most abiding, and if the dreams of the new nationalism in India are to be accomplished, a whole host of singers like Rabindranath will have to prepare the way for such achievement. Our debt to Rabindranath and his like can be repaid only in love and service to the land which he loves so well.

Rabindranath loves India, not with the love of a blind glorifier of the past, but of one who is awake to all the stir and the movement of the age and is illumined with the light of modern culture. The Indian spirit and the Indian point of view are traceable in his writings like a pervasive presence. His message relinks us to India in all essentials even while voicing the need of a new adjustment.

The work of Rabindranath has other than *patriotic* aspects. As pure *literature* alone it has surpassing worth. His writings will not be merely the glory of the hour but will continue to cheer and elevate generations yet to come. His writings are above all the outpouring of a soul which ceaselessly feels out towards God. They are full of the Vaishnava spirit which idealises and spiritualises every relation of life. His hymns breathe a profoundly meditative spirit. His songs open to us the roadways of beauty and blessedness in life. His short stories charm the reader, while an undercurrent of deep purpose runs through them. His musical pieces are full of an enchanting melody. His essays are the outcome of a searching reflection. Everything that he has written glows with the light of his rich genius and that spiritual fervour which is the heritage of the Hindu.

Rabindranath's character is even greater than his writings. In India, perhaps in India alone, the saint has been at the same time philosopher and poet. Rabindranath is poet and saint in one, and therefore doubly great. The joy of communion with God is his. Poet, dramatist, novelist, musician, patriot, meditative sage. Sir Rabindranath Tagore is at present one of the great assets of India."

INDIA : PAST AND PRESENT.

In this brief sketch which aims at turning the gaze of the reader towards this shining light in the literary firmament of India and at kindling in the heart of every

son and daughter of India a deep and passionate yearning to lift our beloved land into a loftier plane of aspiration and achievement, it will be impossible to deal fully and adequately with those influences that have made modern India what it is to-day and that have given to us the supreme singer who voices the dreams and longings of modern India. But still we must try to bear in mind these influences and guage their power and energy aright if we are to realise the significance of the great forward movement of life in India to-day and of Tagore's expression of that movement in perfect prose and verse. India from time immemorial has laid ceaseless emphasis on unity and harmony and has evolved a unique civilisation in which order and progress, wisdom and love, service of man and communion with God have been happily and harmoniously combined. She has, while achieving social harmony and conserving and perfecting the social energies required for efficient self-protection from disruptive forces within and from shattering forces from without, sought to spiritualise individual and social energies, and to bend all the powers and faculties of man and the institutions of society to the service of God, so that the human soul might by a ceaseless course of discipline of the mind and a ceaseless development and expansion of the spirit of love in the home and in society rise to the immortal raptures of the love of God. If we study Indian History aright and with true clarity of vision as to the fundamental underlying currents of national life flowing ceaselessly

through the hastening centuries, we shall be able to realise the true unity and inwardness of Indian History, and then only can we realise the truth of the above statement as to the loftiest ideals of the Indian mind. India waits in eager anticipation for the coming of the great historian dowered in a supreme measure with true historical imagination and vision and conscience who will recreate India's past by the magic wand of his learning and show India to herself in all her peerless beauty in the magic mirror of his marvellous mind. Though his great work which is of such supreme national importance has not yet been done, yet, if we let our minds range over the ages and try to understand the direction of the forward flow of India's national life through recorded time, we can see abundantly and well that India has been loyal to the light vouchsafed unto her and has always sought to realise her vision and her ideal in individual and national life. The consolidation of the ancient Hindu empires had their inspiration and guide in the immemorial Indian ideals of unity and harmony. The Buddhistic age which began with an era of revolt against Hindu ideas of life and God ended in a reaffirmation of those ideas in a more dynamic and powerful form. The Mahomedan period shows how the ebbing away of the great Indian ideas as to individual and national life was followed by the decay of the racial powers of self-protection and how eventually the revitalisation of those ideas by the Bhakthi movement was followed by a new self-consciousness and a new vigour of social and racial life. The

struggling elements of growth and consolidation needed an era of active and strenuous peace and the help of a fostering hand to emerge into full and vigorous life. In the wisdom of Providence England has come into our beloved land to perfect such elements of growth and consolidation. England—the champion of growing nationalities everywhere, the lover of freedom, the emancipator of slaves—has come into our land bringing with her the healthy atmosphere of a higher civic and national life, and hence the elements of unity and progress and consolidation in our land will very soon attain full fruition.

DIFFERENTIA OF INDIAN LITERATURE AND ART.

If such have been the ideals in individual, social, and national life in India, we can well expect them to be given immortal and perfect expression in India's literature and art, because literature and art are the record of the intenser and happier moments and moods of the inner life of a people and are not a mere ornament of life but are a revelation of life. Art is one of the natural forms assumed by joy, and the higher life is a life of increasing and glad realisation of the joy-elements in God's universe. The human soul rises from law into light and from light into love, and in the course of this flight into higher and higher regions of the inner heaven the mind becomes filled with beautiful images and ideas, the eyes acquire a new clarity and power of vision, and the utterance becomes musical and harmonious. Hence it is that "art idealises the real and

reports the ultimate," and that the highest art is in perfect touch with life and at the same time is perfectly creative. Thus all true and great art must be joyful, creative, rhythmical, and harmonious, and poetry as the greatest of all the arts and as dealing with language which is the most subtle and spiritual of all media of self-expression must have these characteristics in a predominant measure. At the same time every great race has got its own ideals, its own dreams, its own aspirations; and its art, which is the expression of its higher life, must hence be thoroughly national. A great national art can come into existence only if certain pre-requisites exist. These are a passionate national spirit, an intense faith in the great future of the country based on an intense pride in the great past of the land, a capacity for measureless self-sacrifice, a rich and glorious past literary and artistic tradition, social sympathy and unity, and suitable assimilation (as opposed to imitation) of elements of universal beauty from other great literatures of the world. Applying these tests, we realise what a great and wonderful national literature and art the Indian genius has developed for the greater happiness of man and the greater glory of God. The passionate worship of literature and art in our land is brought home to our minds by the beautiful stanza.

संसारविषवृक्षस्य द्वेफलेह्यमृतोपमे ।
काव्यामृतरसास्वाद: साधुभिश्वसमागम: ॥

[The poison-tree of phenomenal life bears two

ambrosial fruits, *viz.*, the enjoyment of the nectar of poesy and the enjoyment of the society of pure and godly natures]. Indian literature is remarkable for its serenity and its sanity and its vivid realisation of the sweetness of poetic emotion (रस and ध्वनि). *Rasa* and *Dhvani* are beautiful Sanskrit words the full meaning of which it is impossible to convey by any words in any other language. A Sanskrit stanza says :—

प्रतीयमानं पुनरन्यदेव वस्त्वस्ति वाणीषु महाकवीनां।
यत्तत्प्रसिद्धावयवातिरिक्तं विभातिलावण्यमिवांगनानां॥

(In the words of the great poets there is a pervasive element of beauty and sweetness apart from individual delicacies of thought and beauties of expression, just as in the case of a radiantly beautiful woman there is a quivering splendour of loveliness apart from individual physical graces).

Further, the Indian conception of art is that art is creative and brings to us a revelation of infinite Beauty and Love

"The Light whose smile kindles the universe,
The Beauty in which all things live and move."

Mammata says :

नियतिकृत नियमरहितां ह्लादैकमयीमनन्यपरतंत्रा।
नवरसरुचिरां निर्मितिमादधती भारती कवेर्जयति॥

[The poet's speech creates a world which is not fettered by the laws of destiny and which need not be a mere counterpart or imitation of the created world, which is of the very essence of joy, which is self-existent

and not dependent on anything else, and which is made beautiful by the nine *rasas* or emotions.]

The Indian mind has always recognised the truth of truths in the realm of art that natural forms are but the imperfect incarnations and expressions of ideas and that higher and higher visions of beauty dawn on the purified inner vision and must be realised in marble and on canvas, and by sound and by words. Further, art has made a conscious and successful attempt in our land to realise the unity of things and has been in glad and holy alliance with religion. It has also tried to be popular and to appeal to the universal elements of thought and emotion. The temples which were the centres of the higher life of the people were made the true homes of artistic beauty, and in the presence of God the worker, the thinker, the dreamer, and the devotee met and fraternised as happy children of God.

REVELATION OF RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS IN TAGORE.

Tagore, being a great and representative poet and summing up in himself a great era, can be well expected to be an embodiment of our great racial ideas as described above; and if we study the inspired pages of Tagore's works, our expectations are abundantly fulfilled and realised. First and foremost should be mentioned Tagore's sacramental conception of life. God is the sustainer and upholder of life, and by ceaseless discipline and inner uplift He raises us to the heaven of His love. The very first poem in the *Gitanjali* says in amous words:

"Thou hast made me endless, such is the pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill."

Tagore's works show not only this Indian conception of the sacramental character of life but also the Indian conception of the sacramental character of love. Tagore says in his article on *Kalidasa the Moralist*: "The love that is self-controlled and friendly to general society, which does not ignore any one, great or small, kindred or stranger, around itself—the love which, while placing the loved one in its centre, diffuses its sweet graciousness within the circle of the entire universe, has a permanence unassailable by God or man... ....When love occupies its proper place in subordination to virtue, it contributes its special element towards perfection, it does not destroy symmetry; because virtue is nothing but harmony—it preserves beauty, it preserves goodness, and by wedding the two together it gives a delicious completeness to both." Tagore's conception of the soul and function of art also shows how he is in harmony with the great

traditions of our race in the realms of literature and art. According to him art is the opener of the gate of beauty through which we can pass to reach the very Throne of Grace. Two beautiful passages in the *Gitanjali* bring out this idea very well.

> "My song has put off her adornments; she has no pride of dress or decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me, their jingling would drown thy whispers." (*Gitanjali*, page 6.)

> "I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach." (*Gitanjali*, page 2.)

In short, Tagore's great contributions in the realm of creative criticism show that he has vividly realised and accepted the canons of Indian art as described in the preceding pages. He says: "Inasmuch as art restrains 'reality,' it lets in truth, which is greater than 'reality.' The professional artist is a mere witness to 'reality,' while the real artist is a witness to truth. We see the productions of the one with our corporeal eyes, and of the other with the deeper eye of contemplation. And to see anything in completion requires, first and foremost, that the obsession of the senses be curbed strongly and this declaration be made to all outward forms that they are never ultimate or final, never an end but always means to an end." To sum up his views as to the fundamental conceptions of the Indian mind as to the meaning and purpose of life, I may well quote here the following passage from his *Mission of India* where

he says: "We see that throughout the ages India's only endeavour has been to establish harmony amidst differences, to incline various roads to the same goal, to make us realise the one in the midst of the many with an undoubting inner conviction; not to do away with outer differences, and yet to attain to the deeper oneness that underlies all such differences."

TAGORE'S DEBT TO THE PAST.

It is a delightful and uplifting task to trace the sources of Tagore's mental and artistic endowment, the tributary streams of thought and emotion that have fallen into the Ganges of his song, and have, while increasing its volume and its fruitfulness, become a portion of its life without altering its own native colour or purity or sweetness. It is the great Bhakti movement that blossomed in the songs of the Alwars and the philosophy of Ramanuja on the south and in the songs and poems of Jayadev and Sri Chaitanya and Vidyapathi and Chandidas in the north that has been the main source of Tagore's inspiration. The Religion of Love proclaimed that this universe is a manifestation of His Love and Beauty and that His Love and Mercy are infinite. The heart of India leapt up in glad response to the clarion tones of the songs of the great lovers of God and even to-day these songs are our dearest inner possessions and bring us into immediate and ineffable touch with the divine presence. Tagore was indebted also in some measure to the great Sufi doctrines. The Sufis regarded the existence of the soul as pre-natal and held that the

full perception of earthly beauty was the remembrance of Supreme Beauty in the spiritual world and that in spite of the veil of the body the soul could behold the Divine Mysteries through love and ecstasy. Further not only the higher elements of Islam but also the higher elements of Christianity have had a considerable share in moulding Tagore's genius. But in Tagore the Hindu genius is predominant and overshadows everything else. The great Hindu ideas of the immanence of God, of the unity of life, of God as the Eternal Bridegroom, of life being a joyful preparation for divine communion, of the immortality of the human soul, of *Ahimsa*, of *Sânthi*, of the spiritual kinship of all, of the sovereignty of love, and of the love of God being the crowning glory and rapture of human life find again and again beautiful and immortal expression in Tagore's great poems and songs.

THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE AND TAGORE'S PLACE IN IT.

Such has been the great past of India in life and art and such is Tagore's relation to that great and glorious past. But it is in relation to India's present and her glorious future that we see his genius in all its fulness of splendour. India is now on the threshold of a new era ; and a wise and firm hold on her great ideals, a wise responsiveness to the call of the age, a wise evolution of her national life, a higher development of her literature and art, and a glad self-dedication of the lives of all Indians in their country's cause are required to make this era fruitful and to bring into existence the

greater and happier India of the future. Even the most careless or indifferent or prejudiced observer of the Indian people to-day can see even on a superficial examination that a new spirit has been born in India. A new self-respect and self-consciousness, a passionate conception of our holy motherland as the sovereign of our hearts, a keen and overmastering desire to serve that finds a holy rapture in finding opportunities for service and an intense and poignant agony at being denied such opportunities—these are to be found in every Indian of to-day, be he young or old, whatever be his caste or creed. Unity of place, unity of manners and traditions and culture, unity of religion, ethnical unity, unity of history, the universal reverence for the divine Sanskrit tongue, and unity of laws and of Government have under the impact of the great Western civilisation brought about a real national self-consciousness, though India is continental in size and contains many languages and castes. This sacramental conception of the motherland and of the Indian people has naturally found its perfect and passionate expression in the literature and art of the time, because the soul of the artist and the poet is like the Aeolian harp from which God's breezes evoke passionate melodies. This is the true inwardness of what has been called the Indian Renaissance. The Renaissance in Europe owed its inspiration and power to a departed civilisation and a dead literature. We are fortunate in the circumstance that our Indian Renaissance owes its power and inspiration to a living

civilisation and a vital literature. The great dreams of the past, the great stories of recording the doings and the thoughts of the heroes and heroines of our land, and the holy books bringing to us the message of God's love and the achievements of God's Incarnations in the direction of upholding Dharma and uplifting the lovers of God into the paradise of His Love are being related anew to life in modern times. In this impact of the thought of past times upon the life of the present is born the vivifying and beautiful flame of new and glorious thoughts and words and deeds, the warmth of which keeps our national life from decay and the light of which shows us our way through the utter darkness of the distant future. Tagore's genius can be understood by us properly when we seek to relate it to India's strenuous present and glorious future. He is the greatest poet and prophet of Indian Renaissance. All his works are either a passionate rendering of the infinite moods of the new-born spirit of patriotism and adoration of our motherland or a new and vital interpretation of India's great dreams and deeds in the past. I shall deal with his works in detail later on. But I shall quote here a few of his great patriotic songs which are among his greatest gifts to the nation.

> "To thee, my motherland, I dedicate my body, for thee I consecrate my life; for thee my eyes will weep; and in thy praise my muse will sing.
>
> Though my arms are helpless and powerless; still they will do the deeds that can only serve thy cause; and though my sword is rusty with

disgrace, still it shall sever thy chains of bondage, sweet mother mine".

"Blessed is my birth, because I was born in this country, blessed is my life, mother, because I have loved thee.

I do not know if thou hast wealth and riches like a Queen. I know this much that my limbs are cooled as soon as I stand in thy shade.

I know not what grove blossoms flowers that madden the soul with such scents—I know not the sky where the moon rises with such sweet smiles.

My eyes were first opened in thy light and they will be closed, finally, upon that very light".

LIFE SKETCH.

Sir Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta in 1861. He is the son of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, one of the founders of the Adi Brahma Samaj, and a man of singular purity and unworldliness of disposition coupled with a passionate love of the motherland. Tagore was the youngest of the Maharshi's sons, and lost his mother early in life. Ever since his youth nature was his dear and beloved mother. His school-life was not happy as the soulless, deadening, loveless, joyless routine of studies unrelated to actual life or future needs which goes by the name of modern education could make no appeal to his sensitive, fine-strung, and poetic nature. His father took him along with him in his Himalayan trip and this period of his

life was one of the happy and formative periods of his life. His literary career began very early, his genius having been kindled by the songs of Vidyapathi and Chandidas. In *Sandhya Sangit* (songs of sunset) and *Prarbat Sangit* (songs of sunrise) he wrote original and romantic poems. At the age of fourteen, he produced a musical opera called the *Genius of Valmiki*. He used to write essays for different magazines, especially for his family magazine, the *Bharati*, now edited by his sister Sreemati Swarna Koomari Debi. At the age of seventeen, he was sent to England and studied in the University College for some time. He returned to India after a year and subsequently went to England a second time. He found law unsuited to his nature and came back to India. Since then poems, songs, stories, dramas, hymns, and essays began to pour from him in a ceaseless stream. Indeed his versatility is wonderful. He married in his twenty-third year. The Maharshi then asked him to go down and manage the Shilaida estate. Though Tagore did not at first like this enforced seclusion, his art became broader and deeper by reason of his self-communion and meditation and by his direct observation of peasant life in Bengal. There too he wrote some of his plays, especially *Chitvargada*, *Visayan* and *Raja O Rani*. Till his thirty-fifth year he wrote the most exquisite love-poetry in the Bengali language. This Shilaida period lasted about seventeen years. Then he lost his wife, his daughter, and his youngest son. But these bereavements did not sour his nature but broadened his sympathies and introduced

a higher and more spiritual note into his writings. It was during this period that the *Gitanjali* was written. He then went to England both for the sake of his health and to be with his son during his university career. After going to England he translated some of his poems in the books so well known to all:—*Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon*. His English lectures delivered in America and in England have been collected under the name *Sadhana*. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize. He devoted the entire prize amount of £ 8,000 to his school at Bolpur. In December 1913 the Calcutta University conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Literature. He was subsequently knighted. He has now gone on an extended tour in Japan and America and proposes to devote to his school the sums received by him for his lectures. He has started an "Art House," which is a school for teaching arts and industries. His Bolpur school is one of the most admirable educational institutions in our land. Among his works now available in English are *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *The Post Office*, *Chitra*, *Sadhana*, *Translation of One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *Hungry Stones and other stories*, etc. Many poems and essays and stories by him have been translated in the *Modern Review* since 1910 and his *Reminiscences* have been translated in that valuable monthly since January 1916. His *Letters* are going to be published in the *Modern Review* from January 1917.

TAGORE'S PERSONALITY.

Tagore is a man of striking appearance. Mr. Basanta Kumar Roy says: "The Hindu poet's flowing hair, his broad, unfurrowed forehead, his bright, black, magnetic eyes, chiselled nose, firm but gentle chin, delicate sensitive hands, his sweet voice, pleasant smile, keen sense of humour, and his innate refinement make him a man of rare and charming personality. To look at him is to notice the true embodiment of the artist." He is a man of sweet and unselfish nature and kindles love and affection in every one who has the good fortune to meet him. He is fond of swimming and rowing but his chief joy and recreation are in singing. It is said: "Often he has been heard singing from early morning till late at night, with only a break of an hour or so for noon-day meal." His love of nature is the master passion of his life. It is this trait and his deeply religious spirit that keep up the sweetness of his nature and the radiance of his vision amidst the hurry and bustle and worldliness of modern life. He is an ideal landlord and his practical and boundless love for them is one of the most fascinating traits of his life. He gives remissions of rent when inability to pay rent is shown. There are several primary schools, one secondary English school, and a charitable dispensary in the estate. There is also an agricultural bank there. In his Bolpur school he moves freely with his boys and is beloved by them. He has also taken part in the public life of the country though his chief activities lie elsewhere. He presided over the

Provincial Conference at Pabna in 1908. His recent and famous refusal to lecture in Canada because of Canada's unsympathetic and unfraternal conduct towards India shows the strength and energy of his patriotic emotion. Every thought, word, and deed of his are inspired by his supreme love for India and desire to serve India. It has been very well said of him: "Here is a saint who is not afraid to be a saint, who dares to mingle with the commonest things of the world, and a poet the very closeness of whose contact with earth lifts him ever nearer to heaven."

"SHANTINIKETAN."

Tagore's famous school at Bolpur deserves a special mention. The modern schools in India are institutions which the India of the future cannot and will not tolerate. It is a healthy sign of the vitality and self-protective power of the Indian genius that schools of the stamp of Tagore's school are springing into existence as a growth from within. It is now recognised vividly that every movement of vital importance to the nation depends for its fruitfulness upon the educational movement, and that in matters educational constant vigilance is required because poison at the source will be felt everywhere and will have far-reaching consequences. In the ancient system of education in India there was the highest reverence for knowledge; the teacher was honoured widely; the boy's education was a discipline and preparation for taking an honourable part in the wider spheres of life and becoming worthy of the grace

of God; the teacher as well as the student were free from a commercial conception of education; their life was spent in nature's loveliest spots and was in harmony with nature; and among the students a true and glad democractic spirit prevailed. We have to maintain the essential features of this system while adding thereto mass education and scientific, industrial, and commercial education. But modern education in India is onesided, inartistic, mercenary, loveless and irreligious; it does not provide an honourable place for the Indian languages, Indian culture, or Indian history; it is unreal and unrelated to life; its homage to science is more nominal than real and it is exultantly disloyal to art and religion; and it has not achieved any notable successes in primary or secondary or university education. Tagore's Bolpur school seeks to combine the peculiar graces and glories of the ancient and modern types and systems of education. In it the medium of instruction is the Bengali language. At 4-30 A.M. "a choir of boys go round the school singing songs and rouse the sleepers up into the beauty and calm of the early dawn." The boys clean their own rooms. They then go through physical exercises in the open air, bathe, and meditate for a quarter of an hour. Tagore has written in a letter to Mr. Rose: "To give spiritual culture to our boys was my principal object in starting my school in Bolpur. Fortunately, in India, we have the model before us in the tradition of our ancient forest schools. . . . . . Having this ideal of a school in my mind which should be a home and a

temple in one, where teaching should be a part of a worshipful life, I selected this spot away from all distractions of town, hallowed with the memory of a pious life whose days were passed here in communion with God." After meditation, the gong sounds and the boys "go reverently in procession into the school temple". The boys have classes between 7 A.M. to 10 A.M. in the morning and 2 P.M. to 5 P.M. in the afternoon. All classes are held under the shade of trees when the weather is fine. In the evening the older boys go to the neighbouring villages to teach the village lads. The boys are trained in acting and music and have their artistic nature properly nurtured. There is no corporal punishment. It is a republic of the boys and the discipline of the school is in their hands. The teachers live with them and are quite happy. During holidays the teachers and the boys go on excursions to various places. The boys retire to bed at half-past nine and a choir of boys again goes round the school singing evening songs. Thus they begin their days with songs and close them with songs. Such is this wonderful school and such are its ideals and achievements. As Mr. Ramsay MacDonald says: "The Shantiniketan is no mere seminary for the education of boys. It is alive with the life of India. It is aware of what is going on outside. It shares in the larger Indian life."

TAGORE'S MIND AND ART.

It will be impossible to reveal with any degree of fulness in this brief sketch the heavenly beauty of

Tagore's mind and art. I shall, however, point out a few aspects of his genius so that the affluence of his mental endowment may be realised in some measure. His Bengali style is "full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention." He has revealed to the world the wonderful potentialities and powers of the Indian languages and has won for his mother-tongue international recognition and homage. His English prose style has been well called as "this flower of English prose" by English critics and has discovered even to the English genius new possibilities in the English language. His style has spontaneity, freshness, simplicity, spiritual suggestiveness, golden felicities of phrase, and a pervasive melody. In regard to his mind and art we must remember the high and uplifting note of idealism and mysticism in his works. Mysticism is an inner faculty and endowment by which we realise the spiritual kinship of things and the divine elements radiating light and love and joy everywhere. Tagore's works are full of this wonderful mystical note and reveal his rare power of realising and expressing the spiritual significance and purpose and appeal of common things. Another fact to be remembered in regard to his art is his lyrical supremacy. The lyric mood consists in a rapturous flight into the realm of melodious thought followed by a quick descent. Though lyric poetry is intensely subjective, it contains universal elements because the greatest lyric poets in seeking and attaining perfect self-expression become also the interpreters and

revealers of the universal human heart. Tagore's great lyric poetry is many-sided in its appeal and multiform in its loveliness. Tagore is a true embodiment of the Hindu genius which regards poetry and song not as mere ornaments of life but as the hand-maids of God leading our souls to His lotus feet. His "lyric love, half-angel and half bird" soars in the sunshine of the summer skies of the soul and sees the beauty of what is here and beyond, Nature and God, earth and heaven.) As Mr. Basanta Kumar Roy, well : says, Love flows from his heart, mind, and soul in a continuous stream, assuming all different forms in its windings from the gross to the spiritual, from the known to the unknown, from the finite to the infinite. He interprets love in all its multiform expressions—the love of mother, of son, husband, wife, lover, beloved, patriot, of the Dionysian, nature-drunk, and of the God-frenzied." His nature-lyrics mingle in a beautiful way the beauty of nature in itself and its spiritual and emotional appeal to the soul of man. His patriotic lyrics sweep us off our feet and lift us into a plane of passionate and powerful emotion and bring new energies of service into the heart while bringing gracious tears to the eyes and blissful thrills to the frame. His devotional lyrics bear our souls away to the heaven of God's limitless love. Such is Tagore's lyrical genius. His prevailing lyric mood colours also his plays and stories. In addition to his mystical genius and lyric endowment, we must remember his simplicity, spontaneity, and universality. As the Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews says well : "Rabindra appears to arrive at

the universal, not like by Shakespeare by many different road, but always by the one pathway of simplicity. The simplest human affections, the child-heart of the young and innocent, the simplest domestic joys and sorrows, the purest and simplest yearnings of the soul for God, these go to form the unity towards which Rabindranath's poetic utterance is striving." Again, Tagore's art is thoroughly national. His works are so alive with national feeling that they are, and forever will be, the holy scripture of the lovers of our motherland. In short, he is a shining incarnation of the soul of India and has revealed the soul of India to the world.

TAGORE'S POEMS.

Among his great poems, *The Crescent Moon* deserves mention at the very outset. It reveals to us the heaven of the child's mind and soul in a new and vital manner. It makes us realise what a universal source of joy has been given to us in children and how the child's nature is full of divine simplicity and sweetness. It makes us see in an intimate way the child's sportiveness and winsomeness, its exquisite delight in beautiful things, its gift of imagination, and its purity, and goodness. It teaches us how the diviner elements of life are kept alive in us by the child and how earth is kept in touch with heaven by its influence. Tagore's *Gardener* deals with other aspects of love and contains exquisite love poetry, beautiful nature-lyrics, and lofty devotional poems. The love poetry in this volume of poems is as many-sided as it is beautiful and pure. It is given an

exquisite setting amid the most attractive and picturesque natural scenes. The delicacy of touch and the keenness of intuitive vision evidenced in the devotional poems in the volume are equally wonderful. [The innumerable miscellaneous poems of Tagore's as yet untranslated reveal the same rare gifts. The many miscellaneous poems translated but uncollected in book form and scattered over the pages of the *Modern Review* are equally beautiful. It was the similarity of mental endowment between Tagore and Kabir that led Tagore to translate and publish *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* with the collaboration of Evelyn Underhill. I come finally to the *Gitanjali*, though this was the first of Tagore's works to be translated into English and turned the gaze of the whole world to the greatness of his genius. In it we see the most perfect blossoming of all his varied and remarkable powers. It is a very mine of perfect gems of devotional poetry. It contains Tagore's translation of his own poems and shows what new cadences and harmonies of feeling and phrase can be evolved by the master of one language from another tongue. The peculiar glory of *Gitanjali* is the manner in which it relates to human life to the Divine till it is transfigured in the light of God. The whole world is felt by us as being immeasureably near to us in spirit, and our hearts become full of a new passion of love and peace as we go through the fascinating poems. Mr. Yeats says in his introduction to the *Gitanjali*: "Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilisation itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its

spontaneity. . . An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children, and the changes of the seasons great events as before our thoughts had arisen between them and us." Tagore's *Fruit Gathering* is a sequel to *Gitanjali* and contains devotional poems of perfect loveliness. It contains the unique feature of revealing new elements of beauty and spiritual emotion in the great incidents in the lives of the heroes and heroines and saints of India. In fact all Tagore's poems, and especially *Gitanjali*, are full of true beauty and holiness and lift us to a higher plane of thought and emotion and bring to us

"A tone
Of some world far from ours
Where music and moonlight and feeling are one."

TAGORE'S DRAMAS.

I have already shown how Tagore's lyrical genius has given his dramas a peculiar lyric appeal. His plays are not those of the ordinary Western type in which the story is evolved by the clash of characters and is full of complexity and variety. The blessedness of the universal joys and duties of life and the spiritual significance of things are the inspiring ideas of his plays and the story of the play is only a means and not an end. *Valmiki Prativa* is his earliest play and describes the episode of Valmiki's discovery of rhythmic and poetic expression consequent on the reformation and spiritualising of his life. In *Prakriti Pratisodha*

Tagore shows the supremacy of love over knowledge. In *Achalayatan* we have a prose problem—play describing how a monastery degenerates by shutting out healthy contact with the world and is reformed and purified by healthy outside influences. Other plays by him are *Malini*, *Chitvargada*, *Visayan*. In *Chitra* we have the Mahabbharata story about Chitra and Arjuna lifted into a high plane of art. It describes the love that though rooted in physical attraction blossoms into the marriage of minds and attains the golden fruitage of union of souls. In the *Post Office* the problems of life and death and of the spiritual life are treated with a wonderful lightness of touch. In the *King of the Dark Chamber* we see the successful search of God by the human soul. In the *Phalguni* the gracious doctrine of the immortality of the soul is proved to us by the magic voice of poetry.

TAGORE'S STORIES.

India has been the great story-teller of the world and Indian stories have been blown all over the world by the air currents of civilisation and the seeds have fructified everywhere. In India itself the great story-telling tradition has been preserved and perfected, and the Kathakas and ballad-singers are even to-day the real custodians of popular culture and revealers of God's message to men, even though modern habits of thought have been undermining the faith of the people and has been hostile to real and genuine and passionate fervour in he tellers of the stories. Tagore's art shows the flowering

of these pre-existing characteristics. His stories combine real life and romance and show the omnipresence of the Godward elements amidst the humblest aspects of life. The simplest and most universal elements of Indian life are mirrored in his pages while over all his creations there shines the radiance of a heavenlier light than that which shines before our eyes. The lyrical element in his stories forms their main charm but his lyrical genius while making his short stories perfect prevents his attaining equal success in his longer novels like *Gora*. His short stories are available to English readers in *Glimpses of Bengal Life* and *Hungry Stones and other stories.*

"SADHANA."

This book of meditations deserves a separate treatment because it gives his most mature ideas about the great problems of life. In the first discourse he makes us see how the Indian civilisation owes its peculiar features of repose and harmony and vision to the fact that it was born not in cities but in forests. He describes soul-consciousness in the second discourse. The third discourse deals with the problem of evil and the fourth with the problem of self. Man's highest duty and glory is the realisation of the unity of the self by thorough disciplining of the inner nature and perfection of the inner vision. The last four discourses deal with various aspects of realisation—realisation in lore, realisation in action, realisation of beauty, and realisation of the infinite. Tagore's central teaching is conveyed in

these words: "Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God."

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS.

These are innumerable and invaluable and deserve a full and reverent study. Tagore's innumerable articles on historical, social, literary, and other subjects and his great addresses on public occasions and sermons at Shantiniketan cannot be referred to here but should be carefully studied. His letters are full of feeling and wisdom and reveal his sweet and holy personality. They are being collected and will prove a precious human document. I shall refer here to one letter by him to our great patriot Mr. Gandhi when he refers to the struggle in South Africa as the "steep ascent of manhood, not through the bloody path of violence but that of dignified patience and heroic self-renunciation."

TAGORE'S APPEAL TO YOUNG INDIA.

Such has been the life, personality, and genius of this great poet-saint. His appeal to young India is of unique value and power and may be summed up thus. Be proud to be yourself and glory and rejoice in your country's memorable past. Assimilate the best elements of modern Western civilisation in the realms of science, commerce, and administration without surrendering your personality and becoming subdued in your soul.

Be loyal to your wonderful art and religion and carry them to higher stages of self-expression and self-realisation. Love your divine Sanskrit and beautiful vernaculars with passionate devotion and make your literature a daily light in the hearts of your brethren. Let India be the Goddess of your souls and gladly lay at her lotus feet the fairest flowers of good thoughts, words, and deeds. Be national in your habits and dress and deportment, in your speech and writing, in your thought and emotion. Relate life to love and joy and live in service of man and love of God. Let your motto be: Self-control in regard to yourself, self-respect in regard to all others, self-sacrifice in regard to your motherland, and self-surrender to God.

CONCLUSION.

Tagore ! the Ganga of thy verse and prose
  Comes from His lotus feet to dower with grace
  The world in these most restless joyless days.
A sweeter rapture in our bosom glows
And in our eager hands a new strength grows
  To sing bright India in a thousand lays
  And serve her gladly in a thousand ways
And turn to radiant raptures all her woes.
Accept the homage of our head and heart
  And loveward, joyward, Godward lead us on
  From sloth and strife through paths of work and peace.
God grant we bear in life a manly part
  Rejoicing in the shining inner dawn
  Revealing joys of God-love's mysteries.